

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
Minutes of August 28, 2006**

- I. **ROLL CALL:** Chair Donald Wallace, Selectmen Melvin Adams, Michael Demasi, Kenneth Johnson, and Roger LeClair. Also present were Town Manager Allard, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Sally Davidson, Daniel DiLena, Michael Gonneville, Warren Hagy, Frank Hall, Linda Hall, Nelson Hoffman, and James R. Wilson.

Chair Wallace called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **July 24, 2006 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Demasi, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Selectman LeClair abstaining.**
- b. **August 9, 2006 (Special Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Johnson, seconded by Selectman LeClair, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Selectman Demasi abstaining.**

III. **APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. **Warrant #05-07.** Motion by Selectman Adams, seconded by Selectman LeClair, to approve Warrant # 05-07 in the amount of \$83,602.13. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

IV. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- a. **Sally Davidson: Board of Recreation Appointments.** Ms. Davidson had provided the Selectmen with information in their packets about the seven (7) Northfield residents (including herself) who would like to serve on the reconstituted Board of Recreation as well as a mission statement and five (5) year vision. She stated that their vision included expanding recreational activities to a year-round basis, including all age groups and not focused only on organized sports.

Chair Wallace stated that the Board of Recreation has an important advisory role in the community and hopes that the Selectman and the new Board of Recreation will work together on establishing budgetary priorities, etc. Ms. Davidson looks forward to working with the Selectboard but hopes that whenever information and recommendations are forwarded to the Selectmen, the Board of Recreation will get a timely response.

Linda Hall stated that she had served on a previous recreation board many years ago and she had seen how the situation had deteriorated over the years, perhaps due to a lack of volunteers, and wants to see Northfield's recreational programs rejuvenated. Daniel DiLena stated that he would like to see some fundraising efforts on behalf on expanded recreational programs, as this would lessen the burden on the taxpayers.

Michael Gonneville stated that planning ahead is good but nothing will be accomplished unless the new Board of Recreation has the support of the Selectboard and the Northfield community. Chair Wallace suggested that the new board might wish to interact with the Planning Commission as well, since recreational concerns are incorporated in the recently revised Municipal Plan. Motion by Selectman Adams, seconded by Selectman Demasi, to appoint Linda Hall, Daniel DiLena, Frank Hall, Michael Gonneville, Lori Bussiere, Lisalee DiLena, and Sally Davidson as the new Board of Recreation. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

V. **MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. **DRAFT Personnel Policy.** The draft policy has been forwarded to the Management Subcommittee (Selectmen Adams and LeClair) for their review before going before the whole Board. Selectman LeClair stated that they had not yet met with their Village Trustee counterparts on this matter but hope to do so before the next regular meeting (09/11/06). They plan to have a report back by that time.
- b. **Status Reports: Various Projects**
1. **Brown Public Library 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday.** Manager Allard stated that the plans for the celebration on September 24, 2006 are ongoing and there have been many activities so far and to come, i.e. poster contest, etc.

2. **VLCT Wellness Program.** Manager Allard stated that the program is proceeding well and that the Northfield Municipality had already received a \$5000 credit towards insurance costs.

## VI. SELECTBOARD

- a. **Proposed Town Charter.** Chair Wallace noted that because of the strict timeframe for signing the warning and timely public hearings, he already has scheduled two (2) public hearings that will be held on Monday, September 25, 2006 (prior to the regular meeting) and on Tuesday, October 3, 2006. He regrets that he was unable to consult with the Board on this beforehand.

Selectman Adams then expressed his general dissatisfaction with the way this matter had been handled and with the proposed charter itself. He noted that the public hearings would have no impact on the wording of the proposed charter but would merely inform the public about its contents. He added that the group behind this petition had not presented this document in a public forum before submitting it to the Town Clerk and has made no attempt (before or since) to demonstrate any need for it. He stated that town charters are supposed to clarify local exceptions to state law but this one seeks to create a whole new form of local government. He found many omissions in the proposed charter's attempt to delineate the various elected and appointed town boards and officials (and their powers). The same could be said for the proposed charter's depiction of town employees. Selectman Adams stated that governing is not the responsibility of an unelected ad hoc group. He noted that the voters had previously approved the town manager form of government and this document would undo this public vote. He thought that the section concerning the recall of elected officials, and their subsequent exclusion from any town office for five (5) years, was especially draconian and unconstitutional and without any justification. He also felt that the restrictions on the growth of the public utilities probably would inhibit economic growth. To summarize, Selectman Adams felt that the petition was presumptive, premature, and unnecessary in that it attempts to fix something that is not broken.

Nelson Hoffman stated that he had only read a blurb about the proposed town charter in the *Northfield News* but knew nothing of its contents. He asked whether this petition had ever been out for public scrutiny and added that the group involved apparently has never held public meetings to show the need for this charter. He would like to get a copy of it to review. Chair Wallace stated that copies would be made available at the Town Clerk's Office and noted that this, like holding the election, will be an unplanned expense.

Chair Wallace added that he was most disturbed by the fact that at this year's Town Meeting there had been a public request (under non-binding resolutions) for the Board to form a committee to study town merger and report back within a strict timeframe on how to accomplish it in a timely manner. He noted that the Merger Committee was formed, has held public meetings, and is working on the logistics of merger. This proposed charter would derail this whole process that began in response to an open and public vote. Selectman Adams specified that his statements were not meant to criticize those who had signed the petition but the document itself.

- b. **Belniak Driveway Permit.** Motion by Selectman Johnson, seconded by Selectman LeClair, to approve the Belniak Driveway Permit with the conditions specified by Highway Superintendent William Lyon. Selectman Adams stated that when there was a previous driveway permit granted in the area, there had been a condition to upgrade the road with mat and gravel. He feels that there should be a similar condition on this permit. **Motion failed 0-5-0.** Manager Allard will review this matter with Superintendent Lyon and bring a revised request back to the Board.
- c. **Grand List Errors & Omissions.** This request from the Listers would reduce the taxable real value of one (1) home by \$271. Motion by Selectman Adams, seconded by Selectman LeClair, to approve the document. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. **Planning Commission Resignation.** Chair Wallace noted that the David Tucker, Chair of the Planning Commission, has submitted a letter of resignation. Motion by Selectman LeClair, seconded by Selectman, to accept Mr. Tucker's resignation (with regret). **Motion passed 5-0-0.** Manager Allard was authorized to advertise the vacancy; the Planning Commission will interview the candidates and provide a recommendation to the Selectmen at a later date.
- e. **VLCT Annual Business Meeting Voting Delegate Designation.** Motion by Selectman Adams, seconded by Selectman LeClair, to appoint Manager Allard as the voting delegate. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- f. **Parking Ban Lifting for Norwich University's "Welcome Home" Tribute & Concert (09/23/06).** Chair Wallace stated that for similar events at Norwich University, such a request means lifting the parking ban on the Town (i.e. southern) section of the Crescent. However, he would like to see this limited to the west side of the Crescent so that emergency vehicles will still be able to navigate the area. Motion by Selectman LeClair, seconded by Selectman Demasi, to lift the parking ban on the west side of the Town section of the Crescent for this event. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- g. **Merger Committee update.** Selectman Adams noted that the minutes of the last meeting were in the packets. The committee meets the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Monday of each month and they plan to hold public hearings soon. When the public hearings are scheduled, they will be well publicized in the *Northfield News*, etc.
- h. **Northfield Historical Society.** In the packets, there were copies of an invoice from the Accounting Manager to the Historical Society seeking payment for its share of utilities at the Brown Public Library/Paine House complex. Selectmen Adams and LeClair (Management Committee) will soon meet with Jay Pedley (Historical Society) on this matter.
- i. **Status Reports: Various Projects**
  - 1. **School Budget Vote Petition.** Chair Wallace stated that a petition had been received this afternoon to reconsider the School Budget vote of August 1, 2006. The Board of School Directors will be scheduling the revote soon. There was uncertainty as to whether or not the Selectboard could approve a Town tax rate before this process is resolved. Manager Allard will review the matter and report back to the Board.
  - 2. **Labor Day Festivities.** The celebration will be next weekend. The Board congratulated this year's Labor Day Parade Marshals, Richard and Carol Jean Suitor, on a well-deserved honor.

**VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** Non-agenda items

- a. **James R. Wilson: Merger Committee.** Mr. Wilson asked that as the Merger Committee is now fully constituted, it might be a good idea to name its members for the record. The Merger Committee consists of Selectmen Melvin Adams (Chair) and Michael Demasi; Trustees Richard Suitor and James Wilson; Village residents Michael Popowski and Frank Plumley; and non-Village residents Stephen Jeffrey and Jay Pedley.

**VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- a. **Personnel Matter.** Motion by Selectman Demasi, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:21 p.m.

Motion by Selectman Demasi, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:37 p.m.

Motion by Selectman Demasi, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to appoint Selectman Adams as the Board's observer to the union negotiations. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- IX. **ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Demasi, seconded by Selectman Johnson, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes are subject to approval at the next scheduled meeting.